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Refugee Resettlement in the United States: The Role of the Voluntary Agencies

Norman L. Zucker*

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF A REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

Statistics on refugee resettlement in the United States are obsolete as soon as they are published.¹ What does remain current and constant, however, is that there is a global refugee crisis. The numbers of refugees in the world are not likely to diminish, and indeed, given the vagaries of international politics, the world's refugee population is likely to increase. As a major world power the United States has had to evolve a refugee policy. This policy operates on two levels: on the foreign level there has been an attempt to provide for the regional and international resettlement of refugees and to furnish monetary and commodity aid through international organizations and voluntary private agencies. On the domestic level, the United States, for political and humanitarian reasons, has accepted for admission and resettlement, and ultimately citizenship, more refugees than any other nation.²

The refugee admission-resettlement process is circular: successful refugee resettlement eases the way for future refugee admissions; unsuccessful resettlement works to inhibit refugee admissions because Congress will be reluctant to admit refugees who are perceived by the public to be a problem. Essential to the American refugee resettlement scheme is the role of the nonprofit voluntary agencies.

The existing resettlement system, with the voluntary agencies as key

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actors, evolved in the context of refugee admissions. After World War II ended, the plight of millions of uprooted people, the "displaced persons" (DPs) of a war-ravaged Europe, moved President Harry S Truman to issue a special directive to speed up the admission of tens of thousands of DPs.³ The directive operated within the confines of existing immigration quotas, but it introduced an important innovation—the "corporate affidavit" (the Corporate Affidavit Program of 1946). The corporate affidavit was a guarantee of financial support given by the voluntary agencies so that the refugee-immigrant would not become a public charge. Since most DPs had no means of support, the voluntary agencies' corporate affidavit qualified for admission thousands for whom entrance to the United States otherwise would have been impossible. The Truman Directive was the forerunner of the first significant refugee legislation in American history, the Displaced Persons Act of 1948.⁴ Under the Act (and its 1950 amendments)⁵ responsibility for resettling DPs was assigned to the voluntary agencies and state commissions. For the next thirty years, and even after the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980,⁶ newcomers continued to flow into the United States under a series of ad hoc legislative and executive actions which were, in the main, direct responses to a given crisis. Under the Presidential Escapee Program of 1952, the Refugee Relief Act of 1953,⁷ the Refugee Escapee Act of 1957,⁸ the Refugee Fair Share Act of 1960,⁹ and a variety of parole programs authorized by the attorney general, uprooted Europeans, Hungarians, Dutch-Indonesians, Hong Kong Chinese, Cubans, Ugandan Asians, Chileans, Soviets, East Europeans, and Indochinese have entered the country. And most recently, more than 125,000 Cubans and perhaps 10,000 Haitians were admitted under the Carter Administration's politically determined category of "special entrants."¹⁰

Traditionally, new entrants—immigrants and refugees alike—were aided in resettlement by private nonprofit voluntary agencies and their local constituents who relied solely on self-generated resources. With the coming of refugees from Fidel Castro's Cuba, resettlement strategies and practices began to change. For the first time, the United States was a country of first asylum for a large number of refugees, and also for the first time, the federal government assumed significant financial responsibility in assisting refugees to resettle. The arrival of the Cubans introduced a public input into refugee resettlement. One aspect of this public input was federally financed, state-administered public assistance; the other aspect was the device of a contractual partnership that would, in time, be institutionalized between the federal government and the private voluntary agencies in the domestic resettlement of refugees.

By November 1960, Cuban refugees were flooding into Florida at a rate of 1,700 a week. These refugees, like many others before them, had to leave their assets behind. Voluntary agencies, at first using private resources,

responded to the refugee needs. Then, in December 1960, President Eisenhower established a Cuban Refugee Emergency Center in Miami and four voluntary agencies (National Catholic Welfare Conference, Church World Service, International Rescue Committee, and United HIAS Service) were given federal funds to aid in resettlement. A year later, President Kennedy instructed the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to implement a program of federally funded assistance to Cuban refugees. This program included resettlement contracts with the voluntary agencies.¹¹

In the next decade the government continued to contract with the nonprofit voluntary agencies (generally referred to in government jargon as "volags") to resettle refugees. Numerically Cubans, as a group, continued to be the prime beneficiaries of volag resettlement efforts until 1975. In that year, the Indochinese began arriving and the volags moved into a new phase of activity and a new relationship with the federal government. Following the disorderly American evacuation from Saigon, the State Department contracted with the volags to resettle the Indochinese refugees.

In the eight months from May through December 1975, some 130,000 Vietnamese and 5,000 Cambodian refugees passed through emergency transit camps and into American society.¹² In order to facilitate their integration into American life, Congress enacted the Indochina Refugee Migration and Assistance Act of 1975.¹³ Now there were two major refugee programs, the Cuban program and the Indochinese program. The involvement of the various federal, state, and local public agencies with the voluntary agencies was becoming institutionalized; a second phase had begun.

The second phase of volag-government partnership broadened soon thereafter with the passage in 1978 of a new domestic assistance program to aid refugees not covered by the existing discrete Cuban and Indochinese programs. This program, which took effect in the 1979 fiscal year, known as the "Soviet and other" refugee program, provides funds to volags on a fifty-fifty matching basis.¹⁴

The piecemeal refugee admission and assistance programs that came into being in the second phase were a response to the roiled international conditions that were producing refugees, but they did not represent any well-formulated policy of acceptance and resettlement. Refugee resettlement by the end of the 1970s had become increasingly expensive and administratively complex. The interdependence between the many public and private entities on federal and state levels required greater coordination. In 1979, in an attempt administratively to rationalize the process of refugee resettlement, President Carter, by executive order, established the Office of the Coordinator of Refugee Affairs in the Department of State.¹⁵

The establishment of the Coordinator's Office and the passage of the 1980 Refugee Act signaled the beginning of a new, the third and current

phase, of the volag-federal partnership. Under the 1980 Refugee Act the Coordinator's Office was statutorily recognized and an Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) was established within the Department of Health and Human Services.¹⁶ ORR was mandated to develop a comprehensive program for domestic refugee resettlement. Currently the ORR is examining the role of the voluntary agencies in domestic refugee resettlement and trying to define more clearly the complex and often chaotic relationships among the volags and the federal, state, and local governments.

THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

Although the voluntary agencies are integral to the formulation and execution of American refugee policy, surprisingly little substantive data about them is readily available.¹⁷ This is doubly surprising when one realizes that they are major participants in overseas refugee management, domestic resettlement, and in the making of overall refugee policy. They testify before Congress on such matters as the numbers of refugees who should be permitted to enter and what their status and benefits should be when they arrive. They participate overseas in preadmission screening and in the management of refugee camps. They cope with the myriad resettlement problems of adjustment and acculturation. They instruct refugees in the naturalization process. And when the refugee is no longer a refugee, but a citizen, some voluntary agencies continue to provide psychological and material help. For their services, which range from governmental and quasi-governmental functions to purely private aid activities, they receive public monies under sundry contractual arrangements (primarily from the Departments of State and Health and Human Services), according to various formulae determined by time, need, circumstance, and, it sometimes appears, Ouija board.

While one generally speaks of "the voluntary agencies," it should be noted that, like cars, they come in a variety of models and have differing capabilities. The private voluntary agencies vary in history, experience, size, denominational affiliation, philosophy, primary clientele, administrative structure, resettlement capacity, and institutionalized resettlement policies and arrangements. At present the major national volags that resettle refugees are: American Council for Nationalities Service, American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, Church World Service, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, International Rescue Committee, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Tolstoy Foundation, United States Catholic Conference, World Refugee Relief Service, and the Young Men's Christian Association. A brief description of each follows.

American Council for Nationalities Service

The American Council for Nationalities Service (ACNS), founded in 1930, is the coordinating organization for a network of thirty-one privately supported member agencies and affiliated local resettlement agencies. Member agencies and affiliates are funded primarily by the local United Funds. ACNS has developed from its member agencies, the majority being "international institutes" located in urban centers. The original purpose of the international institutes was to assist the foreign-born in adjusting to American life and becoming an integral part of the American community. The institutes are still doing that, but they now perform, as well, the entire complement of resettlement services.

Given the federated organizational structure of ACNS, the agencies, although responsible for core services, vary from city to city in the programs and services they offer.

As part of its Special Program Services, ACNS publishes the authoritative immigration law periodical, *Interpreter Releases*, and *How to Become a Citizen of the United States*,¹⁸ a handbook on naturalization. ACNS, in 1979, joined with the privately financed United States Committee for Refugees, an information and advocacy body, in the publication of *World Refugee Survey*.¹⁹

In addition to its refugee programs in the United States, ACNS provides the Joint Voluntary Agency Representative (JVR) for Indonesia and is responsible for the programs in refugee camps on the Indonesian islands and processing in Singapore.

American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, Inc.

The American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, Inc. (AFCR) is the creation of the distinguished Czechoslovak diplomat, Jan Papanek. Dr. Papanek organized the AFCR in 1948, after the Communists came to power in Czechoslovakia, to help resettle refugees from Czechoslovakia and other Communist-dominated countries in Central and Eastern Europe. More than thirty years later, Dr. Papanek, now an octogenarian, as executive director remains the driving force behind AFCR.

Although it is the smallest of the national volags, since its inception AFCR has helped over 100,000 people. In addition to resettling Europeans, AFCR has helped to resettle Ugandan Asians, and since 1975 has participated in the resettlement of the Indochinese.

Church World Service

Church World Service (CWS) is a department of the Division of Overseas

Ministries of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Since 1946, CWS has been the service and umbrella organization for its constituent Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations. An Immigration and Refugee Program Committee (IRCOM), composed of a designated refugee officer from each denomination, determines collective policy and programs. Both member denominations and IRCOM engage in a wide range of activities: they generate sponsorships, educate, recruit, and train resettlement workers, and engage in immigration and refugee advocacy. In emergency situations, they also give aid to refugees.

Each of the fifteen denominations within CWS has its own resettlement office and staff who initiate sponsorships and follow them up. Reception and placement of the refugees from airport reception to resettlement planning is the responsibility of the sponsoring congregation. (If refugees move to another area, however, there will not usually be a follow-up sponsor for them in their new localities.) The continuous monitoring of resettlement progress is the responsibility of the sponsoring congregation, while emergency counseling and financial assistance are provided by the CWS Immigration Program on an individual basis through the denominational offices.

CWS is deeply committed to the concept of the "congregational model" of refugee resettlement, believing that sponsorship is more than economic assistance, and includes moral and psychological commitments. Under the congregational model, the refugee is sponsored by a church congregation and does not become dependent on a single individual for the emotional and financial costs associated with resettlement.

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) is the refugee and migration agency of the organized Jewish community in the United States. HIAS' roots go back to the *landsmanschaften* (immigrants mutual aid societies) established in New York by Jewish immigrants in the nineteenth century. In its hundred years, HIAS has aided more than four million people and helped to ameliorate the trauma of almost every major refugee migration to the United States.

Over the years, HIAS has built a finely honed, highly professional system for refugee resettlement. HIAS is centrally coordinated and uses the facilities provided by local Jewish Federations and their direct service agencies (such as Jewish family services, Jewish vocational services, and Jewish community centers) in almost every major city in the United States.

Under the HIAS resettlement pattern, the refugee, whether Jewish or not, becomes the responsibility of the organized Jewish community, and is aided by qualified, trained professionals. These professionals train and organize volunteers and other available lay resources. Congregations,

groups, families, and refugee families in the United States may be used as sponsors. In those cases where the stateside relative, himself often a new-comer to the United States, is capable of assuming the major responsibility for the resettlement of his oncoming family, a professional HIAS agency prepares the relative for the oncoming family and provides assistance. Those few cases of close family reunion which occur in remote areas, not serviced by a HIAS link, are carefully monitored from the central office in New York. Where possible, they are put in touch with the professional services of another voluntary agency.

International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee, Inc. (IRC), was founded in 1933 to assist the victims of Nazi persecution. In its nearly half-century of service, IRC has spoken out loudly as the conscience of civilized society against the depredations of the twentieth century barbarians. But it has done more than raised its voice. Since 1956, the IRC Commissions have heightened awareness of refugee problems and initiated specific refugee aid programs.²⁰

Since its inception, IRC has grown into a multifaceted organization with more than thirty offices around the world. IRC now offers emergency food, clothing, shelter, medical assistance, a full complement of resettlement programs, and counseling for emigration and asylum problems. IRC, as an independent nonsectarian voluntary agency, relies on both public and private funds and makes judicious use of volunteers.

In the United States the IRC resettles refugees through its network of fourteen regional offices. (Five of IRC's offices are in California where nearly one-third of all Indochinese now reside.) IRC's regional offices vary in size, depending on their allocation of the monthly refugee arrival rate, and all employ professional resettlement staff. Paid employees are supplemented by volunteers who do a variety of tasks such as finding housing and jobs.

IRC usually acts as the primary sponsor; its offices are set up and staffed to do the actual resettlement work. In cases of family reunion, the local IRC office acts as a cosponsor with the "anchor" relative. When this happens, the "anchor" relative and the IRC office, prior to the new refugee's arrival, agree on what assistance each will provide. This prearrival contract defining assistance arrangements is also used in instances in which nonfamily individuals act as sponsors. In the few cases where IRC is not the primary sponsor, IRC, nevertheless, where appropriate, provides back-up financial assistance, professional case workers, and counseling.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

The Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) is an outgrowth of Lutheranism's historic concern for immigrants. In 1939 a department of welfare within the National Lutheran Council was organized to help refugees and was the forerunner of the Lutheran Refugee Service, which in turn, from 1954 to 1956, became the Lutheran Immigration Service. When the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. began in 1967, its Department of Immigration and Refugee Services continued the resettlement work. At present, LIRS, through its national office in New York, coordinates a network of nearly forty regional and district offices which are staffed by professional Lutheran social service agency personnel.

LIRS' primary sponsoring unit is the local congregation, but, where and when appropriate, community groups and associations are also used. LIRS practices, whenever possible, the concept of "cluster resettlement"—the placement of refugees in groups large enough to enable them to develop their own support systems but not so large as to make them an identifiable minority creating a burdensome social and economic impact on their host community.

Tolstoy Foundation

The Tolstoy Foundation, Inc. (TF) is a nonsectarian, nonprofit, charitable organization that has been assisting refugees since its establishment in 1939 by Alexandra Tolstoy and other prominent Russian emigrés. The Tolstoy Foundation's original purposes were to aid Soviet immigrants and to establish a center of Russian culture in the United States. Those purposes still hold, but Tolstoy's resettlement activities have been enlarged since the conclusion of World War II. TF, after the 1956 Hungarian uprising, changed the words of its charter from "to assist Russian refugees" to read "to assist Russian refugees and others." Tolstoy now helps refugees from all over the world.

United States Catholic Conference

The Catholic Church traditionally has had a concern for all needy people. However, the specific organizational roots of the present Catholic resettlement structure, the Migration and Refugee Services of the United States Catholic Conference (MRS/USCC), go back to 1920, to the Department of Immigration within the framework of the then National Catholic Welfare Conference. In 1938, the Catholic Committee for Refugees was established to aid refugees fleeing Nazi persecution in Europe. The War Relief Services (now the Catholic Relief Services) were created in 1943 to resettle and

provide aid for World War II refugees. In May 1965, the Catholic Committee for Refugees, the resettlement branch of the Catholic Relief Services, and the Department of Immigration were merged, and renamed the Migration and Refugee Services, United States Catholic Conference.

The USCC is the largest of all the voluntary agencies resettling refugees. In its Indochinese Refugee Program alone, it has resettled more than 100,000 refugees since 1975. The USCC is the national-level action agency of the Catholic Bishops of the United States in the broad field of migration, immigration, and refugee affairs. USCC's program has the total support of the Church. A national office in Washington, D.C. coordinates four regional offices and 170 diocesan offices, each with a diocesan resettlement director. USCC uses almost all types of sponsors—individuals, families, private groups, civic groups, parishes, etc.—but prefers to use the group approach (*i.e.*, a parish, church society, or civic organization) in assimilating the new family into the adoptive community. USCC literature stresses that while sponsorship is not a legal commitment, it is a moral one.

Sponsors have available to them the services of the diocesan resettlement director who orchestrates a panopoly of services through Catholic charities, social services offices, and appropriate state and federal programs. USCC has a large professional and volunteer staff throughout the United States.

USCC and LIRS, the two voluntary agencies with local child-care affiliates, were given responsibility by the Office of Refugee Resettlement for unaccompanied minors. USCC also staffs and manages the Joint Voluntary Agency offices in Singapore and the Philippines.

World Relief Refugee Services

World Relief Refugee Services (WRRS), an affiliate of the National Association of Evangelicals with a membership of some 38,000 religious organizations, has a history of missionary activities, developmental aid, and international relief work. WRRS, however, is a newcomer to the ranks of the established voluntary agencies which, for many years, have been resettling refugees in the United States. As a resettlement agency, WRRS dates only from February 1979. Despite its short resettlement history, and because of its large national constituency, WRRS has already resettled more than 6,000 refugees.

The YMCA

The International Division National Council of the YMCA is the newest addition to the voluntary agencies that are resettling Indochinese refugees in the United States. As of the end of 1980, the YMCA has resettled nearly

2,000 Indochinese. The YMCA has twenty-six local affiliates actively participating in its resettlement programs and expects to increase the number of participating YMCAs.

COORDINATING THE SOVEREIGN VOLAGS: THE AMERICAN COUNCIL OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES FOR FOREIGN SERVICE

The American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, Inc. (ACVAFS), was created in 1944 to provide a forum for information exchange and, where relevant and possible, bring about cooperation and joint planning among the independent voluntary agencies. At present it has some forty member agencies and six cooperating agencies. Each member agency has a seat on the board of directors. Because of the large board membership, actual operational policy is made by the executive committee which, in turn, relies on standing committees composed of representatives of interested agencies.

The Committee on Migration and Refugee Affairs acts as the coordinating mechanism for the resettlement volags. It should be stressed, however, that the voluntary agencies represented on the committee are there as sovereign, independent entities. Each of these sovereign volags has a different structure, philosophy, constituency, and resource base. Moreover, the size of the volag, its reputation (actual, or more important, perceived), the length of time it has been resettling refugees, and the personal stature of the volag representative come into play in arriving at committee positions. No votes are taken; policy is hammered out by consensus. The committee on Migration and Refugee Affairs is unlikely to adopt a policy position to which one of the major resettlement volags is vehemently opposed. At times, agreement is not achieved. For example, in the early days of the Indochinese resettlement program, a dispute arose about a common "pass-through" sum to be given to each client for his or her discretionary use. The volags still do not have a common policy on pass-through money and, given their structures and operating methods, agreement is unlikely.

There are other schisms, too, including a generational split: the established large, powerful members of ACVAFS will go to the defense of their smaller veteran colleagues in the "club," but they will not respond with the same vigor to champion the cause of the newcomers to ACVAFS. Nor would refugee mutual aid associations, directly representing the Indochinese as resettlement agencies and participating as members in ACVAFS, be met with any great enthusiasm. And there is, if not a split, at least some

common misperceptions between the Iowa Refugee Service Center and the New York-based volags.

While the volags are concerned with preserving their autonomy, independence, and idiosyncratic methods of operation, in most instances, their common concerns outweigh their differences.²¹ Differences are usually fudged or papered over, and a united front is presented to outsiders, the public at large, and those people and institutions involved in refugee policy and administration.

Early in 1977, the American Government decided to accept, each month, 100 Indochinese boat refugees and their families. As part of the admission process, the government asked the voluntary agency representatives in the field to assist U.S. consulates in processing the refugee cases, and the ACVAFS office was requested to allocate cases to the resettlement agencies. That was the beginning of ACVAFS' Indochinese Refugee Data Center. The Data Center is the conduit through which all Indochinese refugees are channeled to the volags.

The Indochinese Refugee Data Center is staffed by ACVAFS personnel who handle the records transmitted from the refugee camps. However, the actual allocation process—which refugees and how many go to each volag—is determined by junior level personnel from the participating volags. At the allocation meetings, volag representatives analyze biodata and accept cases according to a variety of factors such as family reunion, geography, ability to handle a specialized ethnic group, and availability of sponsors.

ACVAFS has an international counterpart, the International Council for Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), which is the permanent liaison structure for voluntary agencies active in all aspects of worldwide humanitarian assistance, including refugee aid. ICVA has a special working group which monitors the global refugee situation.

THE IOWA REFUGEE SERVICE CENTER

Although the private voluntary agencies have borne the brunt of the refugee resettlement effort since 1975, at one time or another, six states (Washington, Idaho, Iowa, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Maine) actively sponsored Indochinese refugees in a role comparable to that of the volags. As of December 1980, Idaho and Iowa were the only states to sponsor the resettlement of Indochinese refugees.

Idaho's program is too small and too new to comment on. In January 1980, Idaho signed a contract with the Department of State and as of October 1980 had provided assurances of resettlement for twenty-six Indochinese refugees.²² The Indochinese refugee population in Idaho as of November 30, 1980 was 818.²³

Iowa, in contrast to Idaho, has a large and well-developed refugee resettlement program. Iowa has been active in refugee resettlement because the program had, and still has, the active support and interest of the governor, Robert D. Ray, who is philosophically committed to the concept of state refugee resettlement. Governor Ray is one of three members of the National Governors' Association Task Force on Refugees and has been involved in the development of national legislation relating to refugees. Moreover, competition for jobs and housing, the two major areas of conflict between refugees and other disadvantaged members of American society, are not major problems in Iowa. Iowa's unemployment rate is low, approximately 4 percent, and jobs for refugees can be found in a variety of economic areas, such as small business, manufacturing, and agriculture.

Iowa's involvement as a resettlement agency began in September 1975 with an initial State Department contract to resettle 1,200 refugees. The contract was subsequently twice amended, and in January 1979 Governor Ray invited an additional 1,500 refugees to settle in Iowa. The refugees contracted for by the state of Iowa have been augmented by refugees resettled in Iowa by the voluntary agencies.²⁴

The Iowa Refugee Service Center (IRSC) is part of the Iowa Department of Job Services and administers all public services relevant to refugees. It defines its mission in unlimited terms. IRSC is concerned with sponsorship recruitment and training, and follow-up on both sponsor and refugee. It works in the areas of family reunification, job placement and job upgrading, social services, education, communications and publications, and coordinating a network of volunteers who do a myriad number of tasks. The staff includes Indochinese outreach workers who have capabilities in all the major Indochinese languages. But the staff people are not assigned to any single ethnic group, working with all Indochinese in the hope of avoiding a transplantation of ethnic rivalries in the United States. IRSC coordinates the volunteers who distribute to the refugees privately donated clothes, furniture, and other useful articles, and also oversees the volunteer tutor program. It also publishes a free newspaper, the *IOWA ORIENTING EXPRESS*, which is written in English, Vietnamese, and Laotian. Attention is paid to the news media and they are cultivated assiduously. The results are evident in the positive attitudes of the Iowa newspapers toward refugees and resettlement in Iowa.

The Iowa State Refugee Service Center operates much like a volag. The Iowa experience suggests no practical reason a state should not resettle refugees, if the state's political climate and administrative maturity are conducive to resettlement efforts. The arguments against state resettlement of refugees reflect the same attitudes embodied in arguments against state-owned and operated public utilities. Much of the opposition to state resettlement agencies is based on the fear of competition, the loss of resettle-

ment funds and opportunities to a competitor, or the philosophical opposition by some to any governmental activity when an alternative is available.

THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, THE IOWA REFUGEE SERVICE CENTER, AND RESETTLEMENT

The national voluntary agencies and the Iowa State Refugee Service Center are a reflection of America's pluralistic society. They have differing approaches to the concept of refugee entitlements and differing organizational structures. These differences among the resettlement agencies can be illustrated by placing the agencies on a philosophical and an organizational continuum.

On a philosophical continuum are the beliefs of the agencies as to what benefits and services are owed to the refugee. At one end of the continuum are those who believe that the refugee is owed nothing, or almost nothing—just the opportunity to enter the United States and make his or her way, basically without extraordinary aid, in the new surroundings (IRSC). At the opposite end of the belief-entitlement continuum are those who hold that refugees have been subjected to particularly onerous disadvantages. As a result of their traumatic experiences, they need and deserve compensatory societal help to overcome these disadvantages (ACNS). Most agencies follow a policy which is located somewhere in the middle of the entitlements philosophy continuum.²⁵

The organizational continuum runs from tight centralization to loose double decentralization. At one end of the schema is a single, tight, highly controlled, centralized unit with no field offices (IRSC); next are those volags that have a central office and field offices directly responsible to it (AFRCR, IRC, and TF); then come volags that have central coordinating headquarters with constituent units or affiliates having variable accountability—ranging from detailed guideline supervision to practical independence (ACNS, HIAS, LIRS, USCC, and YMCA). Completing the schema are volags with a very loose system of double decentralization in which a planning and coordinating headquarters works with independent denominational affiliates which in turn have within their structures local resettlement units (CWS, WRRS). Moreover, volags can be classified according to an overriding designation as either "non-sectarian" or "sectarian;" but it must be emphasized that in their resettlement policies all the volags are nonsectarian.²⁶

Although a monolithic system of tight control would seem to be an effective model, this is not the case; a neat table of organization does not necessarily represent organizational reality which involves unchartable aspects such as the role of personalities and the informal networks. More-

over, actual resettlement takes place on the local level where fifty sets of state social benefit rules are multiplied by various local interpretations. The local differences (which may involve attitudes, rule interpretation, work load or office efficiency) are significant; one county in a state, for example, may put people on welfare easily, while another may not do so.

In short, IRSC and the private national voluntary resettlement agencies operate with a plurality of organizational structures, and a plurality of political bases (states, counties, and localities) on which actual resettlement takes place. And although the organizational format of refugee resettlement can make a difference, and the degree of professionalization throughout an organization does make a difference, the formal structure of refugee resettlement is far less important than the resettlement personnel and the sponsors (with their individualized philosophies) involved in actual local resettlement.

Instructions and advice may go out from the national headquarters, but local autonomy determines how instructions are followed. It is the local unit or affiliate actually resettling the refugee that determines the quality of resettlement. The USCC may have guidelines on birth control policy to be followed by field units, but in actuality it is the field unit that makes the decision as to whether birth control advice and materials will be part of the medical program available to the refugee. ACNS may say that it is opposed to the use of welfare funds as a routine procedure, but an affiliate in the field may think otherwise and routinely enroll its clients for welfare. CWS and WRRS act as coordinating units for their denominational membership; each denomination, in turn, has local units, who resettle according to local conditions, philosophies, and resources. In the instances where there is an overall coordinating body, and then denominational resettlement, or in the case of USCC, where patterns vary from diocese to diocese, there is a system of double federalization.

Conformity in resettlement cannot be achieved easily. Certain minimal requirements, however, can and should be built into the resettlement contracts. Local conditions create a wide disparity among the different volags and within the same volag. For example, the practice of taking clients for a complete medical and dental examination within a few days of arrival is not standard. But a minimal requirement and standardization for health screening is possible. The amount of cash given to the refugee-client also differs from volag to volag, and again within volags. Refugees are aware of this absence of uniformity. In this case, since varying volag operating structures utilize money in different ways, it is unlikely a common pattern of distributing pocket money could be worked out at AC-VAFS. Heterogeneity is integral to the volag structures and the volag mechanisms of resettlement; it cannot be changed. Given the idiosyncratic pattern of American life, it should not be. People and volags are different,

and a monolithic model for refugee resettlement is not only unlikely, but undesirable.

An executive of one of the major agencies has likened volags to parents: they want the best for their children (refugee clients), but like parents, their approaches to their children are different.²⁷ The results are not seen immediately, but years later. It is a sound analogy. All volags sincerely try for "successful" resettlement. And all volags, more or less define "successful" resettlement in the same way—the creation of a self-reliant, economically independent client. Not all volags are, like the Tolstoy Foundation, prepared to help their clients for "as long as necessary." But no volag turns a deaf ear to an appeal for assistance—that is in the nature of the voluntary agency personnel.²⁸

The basic resettlement problems of duplication, absence of coordination, and gross disparities of service delivery can only be worked out on the local level, the point of actual resettlement. There are limits to the capabilities of the national level. A rigid master plan cannot be devised that operates with equal applicability in California, Texas, Wyoming, and New Hampshire. The 1980 Refugee Act mandated the creation of State Coordinators and Refugee Councils,²⁹ and the demonstrated interest in local coordination, now coming from Washington, points to an awareness of the problem.

Initially, the conventional wisdom of national refugee policy was that refugees should be resettled on as broad a basis as possible. In theory, this could be done. Theory confronts a divergent reality in California, with the country's largest concentration of Indochinese, or Dade County, Florida, with its concentration of Cubans and Haitians.³⁰ The practitioners of secondary migration—refugees who leave the original place of resettlement—perhaps having imbibed the American wanderlust, are no respecters of dispersion theory. Cluster resettlement may fare better.

Another instance of conventional wisdom changing was the belief in front-loading: affording the refugee opportunities for acculturation such as job, skills, and language training, prior to the refugee's obtaining employment. Resettlement workers now advocate moving with caution in front-loading. It should not be an automatic response, but should be decided on a case-by-case basis. Almost immediate employment has, in most cases, therapeutic and tangible results. English language training, as well, is often more effective when combined with employment.

The key to successful resettlement, in the final analysis, is the sponsor. Here too, modes of sponsorship differ—congregational, individual, group, and business. But again, blanket statements require qualification. Conventional wisdom says the congregational mode is one of the best; yet congregations do dump their sponsored refugees.³¹ In fact, one volag is vigorously working to change its image because people think that its

congregations are "dumping." (There does seem to be some truth to this allegation.) One volag had horrendous results with a business sponsor. Another volag had excellent results with a business sponsor. The answer seems to be, not the banning of business sponsors, but a new set of rules regulating them. In general, sponsors should be monitored and trained. The structure that seems to have a nearly uniform incidence of responsible, successful resettlement is the HIAS structure, with its reliance on local organized Jewish communal agencies and their professional social service personnel.

One must also bear in mind that the refugee influx has been cyclical, not uniform, and federal funds to the volags have been uneven (capitation grants and programs) and not forthcoming on schedule. The absence of predictability (a constant hazard for the volags) has been compounded by a diffuse administrative refugee structure, only now being reorganized, and an ongoing game of musical chairs among federal personnel. At the Department of State, with some major exceptions, refugee personnel have short careers and move on to more attractive foreign service activities. The musical chairs at old HEW never even got warm.

If there is any uniformity to volag performance (including IRSC), it is in the shared sense of fiscal responsibility and cost-consciousness. For most, this also extends to an awareness that successful resettlement involves more than just the refugee; it means successful integration into the community so as not to provoke incidents among other deprived groups competing for subsidized housing, child care, menial (the euphemism is generally "initial entry") jobs, and headstart compensatory education. Unfortunately, with the exception of HIAS, most volags make little concerted effort to adopt and implement policies that actively avoid social confrontation.³² Sloppy resettlement breeds social and political costs. For refugee flows to continue, resettlement must be as frictionless as possible and backlash minimized.

CONTINUING CONCERNS IN THE DOMESTIC RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES

The unabating global refugee crisis has resulted in the creation of an American institutional response mechanism in which the voluntary agencies, as partners with the federal government, are primarily responsible for domestic refugee resettlement. This partnership is now within the purview of the Refugee Act of 1980, evidence of a new awareness of, and concern for, the political and economic implications of domestic refugee resettlement.

Within six weeks of the enactment of the Refugee Act, the Cuban influx

began. The arrival of the Cubans demonstrated that United States refugee policy was still reactive and not planned, and a working mechanism for the orderly determination of admissions had not come about with the passage of the Refugee Act. Correlatively, the emergency response resettlement "policy" which affected the volags was a shambles. The Carter Administration's decisions concerning the admission and resettlement of Cubans and Haitians were overtly political (the importance of Florida's electoral votes in the reelection campaign), confused and contradictory (the open- and closed-arms stance), penny-pinching but also profligate (limited resettlement monies offered to the volags, but enormous expenditures to make habitable a questionable holding camp in Puerto Rico). Yet despite governmental mismanagement, the volags rose to the emergency and processed and resettled the "special entrants."³³

At this writing (the transitional period between the November 1980 elections and the inauguration of Ronald Reagan), the institutional skeleton of the resettlement system charted by the Refugee Act is in place, but the bones have yet to be fleshed out. The Office of the Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement, the State Coordinators, and State Refugee Councils are established. However, new regulations (for example, federally funded cash and medical assistance, volags' responsibility in providing support services, states' relationship to the volags) affecting the operation of the resettlement system will not be effective before the fall of 1982. Top-level personnel changes, normal to any bureaucracy, will be accelerated by the political shift from a Democratic to a Republican administration. Moreover, the 1981 Report of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy will focus attention on the linkage between immigration and refugee admissions, the institutional arrangements for handling immigrant and refugee admissions, and the refugee resettlement system.

Compounding these short-term uncertainties are more fundamental international and domestic political and economic factors, still to be divined and constantly changing, which will directly impinge on domestic refugee resettlement. These factors will condition the specifics of resettlement: the numbers, the populations, and the dollars.³⁴ But while the specifics may change, the issues and concerns of American domestic resettlement will remain constant. These issues and concerns revolve around two broad themes. First, the policy framework relevant to the admission and initial settlement of refugees; and second, resettlement philosophy, policy, and practice. The second theme involves the organizational, financial, and programmatic relationships between the public and private sectors, and the resultant web of interactions among the federal, state, and local governments, the voluntary agencies, and other participants.

Despite the present imperfections in the voluntary agency resettlement

system, the basic system works, and works well. Improvements can, of course, be made, and are being made under the Refugee Act. Many of the problems of poor refugee resettlement are consequences of a rapid response to emergency refugee situations. Some of the problems, such as the absence or discontinuity of promised funds, flow not from the volags, but from the federal government. The volags, as no government bureaucracy seems to be able to do (one need look only as far as the troubles of the Cuban-Haitian Task Force), respond efficiently, innovatively, and effectively to refugee situations. Refugee resettlement is an inexact process which does not, cannot, and should not be equated with the precision of technical engineering. Efficiency should not be the primary goal in a democratic society.

The very diversity and heterogeneity of the volag resettlement system is an advantage. The volags tap both the purse and the conscience of the American public, thereby expanding the potential for effective resettlement. As grass-roots private agencies they are the best way to build a bridge from refugee immigration to acceptance and successful resettlement.

NOTES

¹ Refugee admissions in 1980 have been estimated at 231,000 people who entered in parole status before the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, Pub. L. No. 96-212, 94 Stat. 102 (1980) (to be codified in scattered sections of 8, 22 U.S.C.). In addition, more than 125,000 Cubans and 10,000 Haitians were admitted under the Carter Administration's category of "special entrants." See Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy Newsletter (Sept., Oct. 1980). For fiscal 1981 the number of planned refugee admissions is targeted for 217,000, 14,000 fewer than 1980. However, as the flow of the "special entrant" Cubans demonstrated, projected refugee admission numbers are unreliable. Refugee crises cannot be predicted with precision. Adding to the uncertainty are the political imponderables of the Reagan Administration and the conservative cast of the Congress elected in November 1980.

² From spring 1975 to May 31, 1980, the United States resettled 595,200 refugees. During the same period, Canada resettled the second largest number of refugees, 74,000. See *U.S. Refugee Programs, 1981, Hearings Before the Senate Comm. on the Judiciary*, 96th Cong., 2d Sess. 185, 185 (1980).

³ 13 DEP'T STATE BULL. 983 (1945) (Directive by the President released Dec. 22, 1945).

⁴ Pub. L. No. 80-774, 62 Stat. 1009 (1948).

⁵ Pub. L. No. 81-555, 64 Stat. 219 (1950).

⁶ Pub. L. No. 96-212, 94 Stat. 102 (1980) (to be codified in scattered sections of 8, 22 U.S.C.).

⁷ Pub. L. No. 83-203, 67 Stat. 400 (1953).

⁸ Pub. L. No. 85-316, 71 Stat. 639 (1957).

⁹ Pub. L. No. 86-648, 74 Stat. 504 (1960).

¹⁰ See Bureau of Public Affairs, Dep't of State, Cuban-Haitian Arrivals in the U.S., Current Policy No. 193 (1980). "Special entrant" categorization avoided the designation "refugee," and with it the benefits accorded to a refugee under the 1980 Act. A fuller discussion of the

legislation and executive actions cited in the text may be found in Smith, *Refugees*, 367 ANNALS 43-53 (1966).

¹¹ See Smith, *Refugees*, *supra* note 10, at 49.

¹² CONG. RESEARCH SERVICE, 96TH CONG., 2D SESS., REVIEW OF U.S. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS AND POLICIES 225 (Senate Judiciary Comm. Print 1980).

¹³ Pub. L. No. 94-23, 89 Stat. 87 (1975).

¹⁴ Under the "Soviet and other" program, funds are to be used to meet resettlement needs after the refugee arrives in the United States. See Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Pub. L. No. 95-426, 92 Stat. 963 (1979) (to be codified in scattered sections of 22, 44 U.S.C.). This program complements the reception and placement grants provided by the Department of State and enables the volags to provide services such as English language training and employment counseling. The program was designed to alleviate the disparity in federal funds for different groups of refugees. The Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (HIAS) and six other voluntary agencies are recipients of grants under this program. It should be noted, however, that under this program, volag settlement expenditures are reimbursed at the rate of one dollar for every two spent, with a maximum federal contribution of about \$1,000 per person. A useful account of the refugee programs and the 1980 Refugee Act may be found in REVIEW OF U.S. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS AND POLICIES, *supra* note 12.

¹⁵ 44 Fed. Reg. 32,059 (1979).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 96-212, § 411, 94 Stat. 102 (1980) (to be codified at 8 U.S.C. §1521).

¹⁷ For a fuller description of the voluntary agencies and an annotated bibliography on American refugee resettlement see N. Zucker, "The Voluntary Agencies and Refugee Resettlement in the United States" (August 22, 1980) (Report to the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy) (copy on file with the *Michigan Yearbook of International Legal Studies*).

¹⁸ AM. COUNCIL FOR NATIONALITIES SERVICE, HOW TO BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN (1980).

¹⁹ U.S. COMM. FOR REFUGEES, 1980 WORLD REFUGEE SURVEY.

²⁰ IRC's 1956 Commission to the Hungarian border led to a resettlement program for Hungarian refugees; an African Commission in 1957 resulted in the formation of MEDICO; a 1959 Commission preceded the first wave of Cuban refugees; a 1960 Commission to Hong Kong dealt with the flight of Chinese refugees; a 1968 Commission helped the Czech refugees after the occupation of Prague by the Russians; a 1971 Commission went to India on behalf of East Pakistan refugees; and, since 1973, Commissions to Indochina have focused on refugee problems in Southeast Asia.

²¹ The 1981 voluntary agency resettlement paper presented to Victor H. Palmieri, U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, by Mrs. Ingrid Walter, currently chairman of the Committee on Migration and Refugee Affairs pays tribute to the common denominator in the resettlement work of all the agencies. It emphasizes that: "The strength of the resettlement agency structure has been enhanced in recent years by the ability of such [should read "each"] agency to retain its individuality, and at the same time to work cooperatively." At another point the paper states: "The methodologies may vary depending on the particular circumstances of each refugee and the agency concerned, but the overall goal of self-sufficiency is shared by all." Committee on Migration and Refugee Affairs, American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, New York, Voluntary Agency Resettlement-1981 (July 23, 1980) (copy on file with the *Michigan Yearbook of International Legal Studies*).

²² OFFICE OF THE U.S. COORDINATOR FOR REFUGEE AFFAIRS & OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, DEF'T HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT RESOURCE BOOK 63 (1980).

²³ American Public Welfare Association, Refugee Reports 8 (January 9, 1981).

²⁴ The Indochinese refugee population in Iowa as of November 30, 1980, is estimated to be 7,142. See *id.*

²⁵ An entitlements philosophy continuum could be listed in three steps as follows:

1. Emphasis on refugee: self-help.

2. Emphasis on helping refugee achieve economic independence; offer moral support to attain goals of self-sufficiency and integration into American society.
3. Emphasis on offering necessary economic assistance and moral support to achieve the goals of economic independence and total integration into American society.

The minimalist conception of what should be given to a refugee is best seen in the IRSC approach: "It is the belief of the Iowa Refugee Service Center that this country gives the refugees only two things: entry into the country and the opportunity to make their own way in a free society." See OFFICE OF REFUGEE AFFAIRS, U.S. DEP'T HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE, INDOCHINESE REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, 40 (1979) (statement of Iowa Refugee Service Center). At the other end of the continuum is the philosophy expressed by the executive director of ACNS:

[W]e must, as a nation, come to grips with defining the basic rationale for separate refugee assistance programs, with special entitlements, programs distinct from those available to other disadvantaged groups in our society. . . . The basis for a statement of rationale might be along the following lines: Unlike other immigrants, refugees are forced to leave their homes and develop new lives elsewhere for reasons over which they had little or no control. They arrive in the United States often having experienced considerable trauma and having had little opportunity to prepare themselves for life in a new social and economic environment. They usually arrive with few language or vocational skills readily adaptable to this society. In admitting refugees, we at the same time make a commitment to help them overcome the particular disadvantages deriving from being refugees, and to assist them achieve economic and social self-sufficiency as rapidly as possible. This commitment is in the interests of both the refugee and our own communities, and is consistent with the fundamental precepts of "equal opportunity" and "affirmative action" as embodied in our laws.

Testimony of Wells C. Klein before the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy (March 24, 1980) (on file with the *Michigan Yearbook of International Legal Studies*).

²⁶ See the organizational diagram of the major national voluntary agencies appended to this article.

²⁷ Interview with Donald G. Hohl, associate director for migration and refugee services, United States Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C. (June 5, 1980).

²⁸ The quality of the national volag leadership and the Iowa Refugee Service Center, with minor exceptions, is uniformly high. The leadership is bright, committed, altruistic, and decent. Volag personnel, almost by definition, are hard-working and responsive to the needs of their clients.

²⁹ Pub. L. No. 96-212, §§ 411-12, 94 Stat. 102 (1980) (to be codified at 8 U.S.C. §§ 1521, 1522).

³⁰ As of November 30, 1980, the reported Indochinese refugee population in California was 142,094. See Refugee Reports, *supra* note 23. Given the continuing monthly influx of Indochinese who are resettled on the basis of family reunification and the phenomenon of secondary migration which draws many newcomers away from the sites of their initial placement, California's Indochinese population is destined to grow.

³¹ Aside from "dumping," there have been instances in which congregations have been poor sponsors by failing to appreciate the refugees' cultural norms. And, in some cases, sponsoring congregations have violated the law by actively proselytizing. A publicized incident involved the Thang family who left their sponsor, the Bethany Bible Church in the small farming town of LeRoy, Minnesota, because, among other things, the church pastor tried to prevent the family from attending the important Cambodian New Year celebration. The *Minneapolis Tribune*, which covered the story, quoted the church pastor: "We wanted to help them find Christ and the only way to heaven. After all, it's eternity that counts. If they're going to go to hell, they might as well go to hell from Cambodia as from Minnesota."

. . . It would be wicked to just bring them over and feed and clothe them and let them go to hell. The God who made us wants them to be converted. If anyone thinks a Gospel-preaching church would bring them over and NOT tell them about the Lord, they're out of their mind." See Coleman, *Cambodian family found "freedom" stifling in LeRoy*, Minneapolis Tribune, Aug. 11, 1980, § A, at 1, col. 1.

³² HIAS monitors its affiliated agencies to see first, if there is public assistance and to what extent it is used; second, if there is internal migration; and third, to avoid conflicts with other disadvantaged groups in the community of resettlement and in other program areas. A HIAS survey of its programs in six large cities (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Cleveland, San Francisco, and Philadelphia) showed that professional caseworkers try to avoid placing clients on public assistance. On the two major points of friction between refugees and other disadvantaged groups, competition for jobs and housing, HIAS utilizes the skills of professional caseworkers, sensitive to the political and social nuances of the local community, to dampen and avoid, if possible, conflict. (An illustration of conflict avoidance occurred in Chicago and Philadelphia when, in both cities, landlords desirous of attracting Indochinese as tenants, began evicting minority tenants from their housing. The Jewish Family Service refused to refer any clients to these landlords and successfully discouraged their Indochinese clients from renting apartments in which minority tenants had been forced out.)

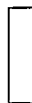
³³ Both Cubans and Haitians are classified as "special entrants" and have been lumped together by the government. See Current Policy No. 193, *supra* note 10. However, the circumstances and situations of the Cubans and Haitians are as different as the islands and rulers from which they both come. Apart from uniformity in classification, governmental response to the influx of Haitians has been far different from its response to Cubans. The Haitians are the subject of a separate and sad saga complicated by federal connivance and attempts to redress the situation by refugee advocate groups who initiated litigation. For an overview and an analysis of government policy see Judge James L. King's July 2, 1980 decision in *Haitian Refugee Center v. Civiletti*, No. 79-2086 - Civ-JLK (S.D. Fla., July 2, 1980).

³⁴ See, e.g., JOINT ECONOMIC COMM., 96TH CONG., 2D SESS., INDOCHINESE REFUGEES: THE IMPACT ON FIRST ASYLUM COUNTRIES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR AMERICAN POLICY (1980). Projected costs for the entire refugee program in fiscal 1981 are given as \$2.056 billion. Of this, "federal funding totals \$1.678 billion (including \$523.3 million for international assistance programs and initial resettlement cost of refugees destined for the United States), and state and local services total \$378 million. This does not include the program for 1980 arrivals from Cuba and Haiti, estimated to be \$115 million." *Id.* at 47. Somewhat different costs and a different categorical breakdown may be found in REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT RESOURCE BOOK, *supra* note 11, at 9-13.

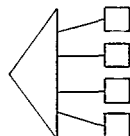
ORGANIZATIONAL DIAGRAM OF THE MAJOR NATIONAL VOLUNTARY AGENCIES*

Nonsectarian Volags

Central Unit



National Headquarters



National Headquarters



*Iowa Refugee Service Center—IRSC is not a private voluntary agency, but an agency of the State of Iowa which acts like a volag in actively sponsoring refugees for resettlement within the state. IRSC is a centralized unit with no field offices.

Field units directly accountable to national office.

American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees—national office and 3 regional offices.

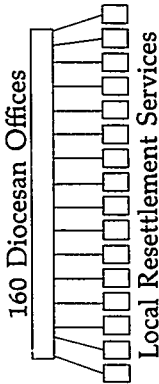
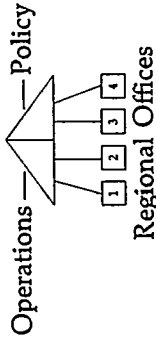
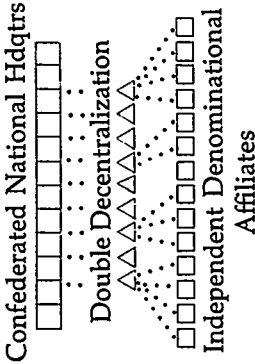
International Rescue Committee—national office and 15 resettlement offices.

Tolstoy Foundation—national office and 7 regional offices.

Local constituent units with varying degrees of accountability ranging from detailed (---) guidelines to virtual independence (...).

American Council for Nationalities Service—national office and 25 resettlement offices and affiliated agencies.

Sectarian Volags



Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society—national office and 52 local offices and affiliates.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services—national office and 38 regional consultants.

Young Men's Christian Association—national office and 26 local affiliates.

Church World Service—national office which coordinates policy for 15 denominational resettlement offices, each with its own structure.

World Relief Refugee Services—national office which serves evangelical denominations and organizations. 7 regional offices and 20 local resettlement offices.

United States Catholic Conference—national office is bifurcated with Washington, D.C. handling policy making and New York City responsible for operational aspects. USCC, the largest of the volags, has an additional organization layer, diocesan offices.